

Welch-Hurst
15800 Sanborn Road
Sanborn Skyline County Park
Saratoga
Santa Clara County
California

HABS No. CA-2006

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CA-2006

WELCH-HURST

Location: 15800 Sanborn Road, Sanborn Skyline County Park
Saratoga, Santa Clara County, California.

USGS Castle Rock Ridge Quadrangle; Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.582380.4121600.

Present Owner: County of Santa Clara (1979).

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: American Youth Hostelry residence (1979).

Significance: Welch-Hurst was built at the turn-of-the-century as a family retreat for James R. Welch, one of Santa Clara County's most prominent Superior Court Justices. The primary materials used in the house's construction are redwood logs and wooden shingles, contributing to its rustic, informal appearance. Square, hexagonal and rectangular sections - the result of successive additions - and extensive landscaping lend a picturesque quality to the over all design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1913 (Carrere interview).
2. Architect: Much of the house's plan was designed by the original owners, Judge and Mrs. James R. Welch.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The property is within the Sanborn Skyline County Park, Section 10, 15 and 16, Township 8 South, Range 2 West, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, further described in the County Records Book of Deeds C080, page 180. Welch acquired the 900-acre estate through multiple transactions. The following chain of title to the property upon which the structure stands has been compiled by data gathered from personal interviews.

1890 Deed, 1890, John M. McElroy sold land to James B. Welch (Garrod, page 4).

- 1902 Deed, Valentine Lotti sold land to James B. Welch (Garrod, page 4).
- 1955 Deed, 1955, Ione Welch and Reuben N. Linn, heirs to J.R. Welch, sold the property to Vernon Pick (Carrere interview).
- 1976 Deed, June 14, 1976, recorded in Book C-180, page 180. Elbin Associates sold the property to the County of Santa Clara.
4. Original plan and construction: No original plans are known to exist. The house's design is in keeping with the general character of the early 20th century Arts and Crafts movement in this country. The two-story main living hall has unfinished redwood walls, trimmed with raised four-inch strips, and the ceiling's rough-hewn redwood log framing is left exposed. Balusters of the main stairway are constructed of twisted redwood tree branches. The hexagonal dining room's built-in sideboard, designed by the Welches, is constructed of redwood burl and finished to emphasize the qualities of the natural materials.
5. Alterations and additions: Physical evidence suggests that the two-story dining room and kitchen section may have been the original nucleus around which the structure evolved. The northeast first-floor wing, used by Welch as his study, was added before 1930 (Carrere interview). The north second-story master-bedroom had a polygonal extension added to the southwest before 1929. This is indicated by the altered roof pitch and new siding. An extension to the kitchen wing's northwest side - as indicated by broken joint lines and logs of different diameter than the original - was probably also completed in 1929.

After 1955 bathrooms were installed between the east and west bedrooms on both floors of the south wing, and to the rear of the fireplace; the kitchen pantry was removed at this time. Three french doors have been remodeled as windows: One on the east side of the south first-floor bedroom, one on the south side of the northeast study, and one on the study's east side. Two small windows flanking the latter door were logged up to allow for interior bookcases.

Around 1955 the large tree which stood to the south of the main entrance porch was removed and the section of the roof which had been cut out to accomodate the tree's growth was filled in. A three-foot parapet, constructed of vertically set redwood logs and surmounted by a pergola, topping the flat roof of the northeast study wing was removed.

During the 1960s the kitchen's north extension with redwood board-and-batten siding was remodeled as a laundry room. The original caretaker and children's garden houses were removed at this time, and the present guest house with redwood board-and-batten siding was constructed. A lean-to section housing the heating equipment was added at the southwest also at this time.

B. Historical Persons and Events Connected with the Structure:

James Roy Welch was born February 2, 1860, near Plainview, Macoupin County, Illinois. Welch moved to Missouri with his family in 1866, and in the 1870s economic depression forced fourteen-year-old Welch to set out on his own, crossing the plains to settle in Boise City, Idaho. Here he enrolled in public school, and had become a teacher and assistant principal by age twenty. In 1882, two years later, he moved further west to San Jose, California, entering the University of the Pacific and Heald's Business College. He also acted as Principal of the University's Commercial Department during this time. Welch was graduated from the university in 1887 with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree. He was admitted to the California bar in 1888, embarking at the time upon a private law practice. In addition, he served as the city attorney for San Jose during 1894-97, and in 1904 he was elected to the State Superior Court, serving in that position until 1931.

Beyond his formal responsibilities as a public attorney Welch was a member of the Board of the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association, the precursor of the Sunsweet Growers Cooperative. He was also instrumental in the successful lobbying efforts to retain Skyline highway as a scenic route along the crest of the Santa Cruz mountains. Welch, his wife, son and three daughters farmed the land surrounding their Saratoga retreat, producing walnuts, prunes and pears. He died at age seventy-one on March 26, 1931. Leading his funeral cortege were Governor James Rolph, Jr., with State Senators Sanborn Young, Herbert C. Jones, State Assemblyman Frank L. Crist, Supreme State Court Justices, U.S. Marshalls and Attorneys, and State Poet-laureate Dr. Henry Meade Bland.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views and photographs:

Panoramic view, ca. 1929, showing east elevation. Original is in possession of Mrs. Marjorie Linn Carrere, P.O. Box 18063, San Francisco, California. Photocopied for HABS collection.

Exterior views, ca. 1950, showing the entrance gate. In possession of San Jose Historical Museum, 635 Phelan Avenue, San Jose, California.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Santa Clara County Probate Records, Probate Court, Santa Clara County Courthouse, Santa Clara, California.

b. Interviews:

Marjorie Linn Carrere, granddaughter of J.R. Welch, San Francisco, California, July 16, 1977; August 5, 1977.

Ches Newell, neighbor and affiliate of Elgin Associates, August 2, 1977.

Ranger Bell, Sanborn Skyline County Park Headquarters, Sanborn Road, Saratoga, California, August 12, 1977.

Leontine Baille Seidel and Louise Baille, childhood neighbors of Welch family, 1187 Norval Way, San Jose, California, August 17, 1977.

Robert Rohrig, Sanborn Skyline County Park, Staff, Sanborn Road, Saratoga, California, August 17, 1977.

c. Secondary and published sources:

Chesnutt, James, "Last Honors Paid Judge Welch," San Jose News, March 28, 1931.

Cunningham, Florence. Saratoga's First Hundred Years. San Jose, California: Harlan-Young Press, 1967.

Garrod, R.V. The Saratoga Story. Saratoga, California: Historical Museum, 1962.

San Jose Mercury Herald, March 29, 1931.

San Jose News, March 28, 1931.

Sawyer, Eugene T. History of Santa Clara County, California with Biographical Sketches. Los Angeles: Historic Record Co., 1922.

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Historic American
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Summer 1977

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Summer 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Welch-Hurst was built ca. 1913. The primary building materials are redwood logs and wooden shingles, contributing to its rustic, informal appearance. Square, hexagonal and rectangular sections, the result of successive additions, and extensive landscaping lend a picturesque quality to the overall design.
2. Condition of fabric: Good; under renovation (1979).

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The house is irregular in plan, measuring approximately 82' x 128'.
2. Foundations: The south wing rests on a stone or concrete block foundation; a concrete front terrace of rocks with cement sealing is in front of the lower portion of the wall. Other areas are on mud sills, poured concrete, or stone walls.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Halved redwood logs, laid in horizontal rows on the first floor, and set in vertical columns on the second. The full circular log is retained at the corners.
4. Structural system and framing: The house's structural system is very irregular. The roof is partially supported by redwood log walls, particularly the vertically-set logs of the upper story, and the corners. A large truss system in the main living hall is somewhat supportive, but the frame does not extend to gable walls.
5. Porches: The front entrance porch, topped by a gable roof, is supported by vertical logs resting on two large stone pedestals. A screened porch at the rear shelters the kitchen door. Two large gazebos extend from the east side.

6. Chimneys: A chimney serves the living room fireplace and another fireplace in the north wing. Both are covered by a very rough aggregate concrete. The living room chimney is topped by a high cylindrical sheet-metal flue.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main front doorway is set into a recessed opening and flanked by multi-light sidelights. The wide, unpaneled oak door is pierced by a four-light window filled with bevel-edged glass in the top half.
 - b. Windows: The windows are swinging casements; some are multi-light and some have a single large pane.
8. Roof: The rectangular south block is topped by a hip roof. The central block has a gable roof, interrupted by gables over the entrance porch and the stairway. The roof of the north section is irregular. Large wooden shingles, approximately twenty-four inches long and exposed about ten inches to the weather, cover the majority of the roof area. Other portions are covered with asphalt shingles and asbestos.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan:
 - a. Basement: A basement extends under the north wing.
 - b. First floor: Irregular plan, including living hall, hexagonal-shaped dining room, study and kitchen area.
 - c. Second floor: Irregular plan.
2. Stairways: The main stairway opening into the living room is constructed of half redwood logs for steps, and the rail and balusters are naturally shaped manzanita branches. The north staircase is a later addition, and irregularly shaped.
3. Flooring: Two-inch wide hardwood boards cover the main rooms. Three-inch wide wooden board flooring is in the second-floor bedrooms. Most of the remaining floors are covered with linoleum.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The living and dining room walls are woodpaneled. The ceiling in the central living hall has exposed wooden decking, rafters and trusses. The dining room has a ceiling of boxed beams with recessed panels. The remaining rooms have painted plaster or wall-papered walls, and plaster or acoustical tiled ceilings.
 5. Doorways and doors: The interior doors are either single-paneled or glazed. A swinging door connects the kitchen and dining room.
 6. Hardware: Most of the original solid brass hardware remains. Handsome brass handles adorn the front door.
 7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: Electrical fixtures.
 - b. Heating: Two forced hot-air furnaces centrally heat the structure.
- D. Site:
1. General setting and orientation: The house is erected upon a fairly flat site on the western slope of the Santa Cruz mountains. The house faces east towards extensively landscaped grounds which include an artificial pond with two floating hexagonal frame structures (duck houses), topped by pyramidal roofs. Large stone gates frame the entryway.
 2. Outbuildings: A garage, measuring 20' x 30' and constructed of redwood log posts, stands to the rear of the main house. A small rectangular building with stone walls and a wooden shingled gable roof, and a two-room guest house stand to the north.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1977 summer project, the first year of a three-year recording project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect; and Robert Brueggmann, Project Supervisor (University of Pennsylvania); with Jack Schaefer, Architectural Foreman (University of Cincinnati); Carolyn Hamm, Historian (Duke University); and student architects Tim Allenbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), Barbara Hendricks (University of Texas), and Jeff Lees (University of Oklahoma), at the HABS Field Office in Saratoga California.

The drawings were edited in the HABS Washington Office during the summer of 1979 by architect David T. Marsh. The historical and architectural data was edited and in some cases further researched during the summer of 1979 by Jan Cigliano, an architectural historian on the HABS staff, at the 1979 HABS Field Office in Santa Clara, California. Photographs were taken by photographer Jane Lidz in the summer of 1980.

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